

Message Text

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51

ACTION SS-30

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R 080944Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1114
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
INFO USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 0120

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US, UR

SUBJ: CHANGING ISRAELI PERCEPTION OF SOVIET MIDEAST ROLE

REF: TEL AVIV 0078

GENEVA FOR STERNER

1. STRIKING ASPECT OF MY CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN EBAN JANUARY 4 WAS INDICATION THAT GOI, ATLEAST FOR SHORT TERM, HAS TAKEN SOMEWHAT MORE POSITIVE VIEW OF SOVIET ROLE IN MIDEAST THAN HAD BEEN CASE BEFORE OPENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE.

2. EBAN SAID HE BELIEVED THAT PROSPECTS WERE GOOD FOR EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT ON SEPARATION OF FORCES BY END OF JANUARY, IN PART BECAUSE SOVIETS PERCEIVED THAT THEIR OWN INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY ITS ATTAINMENT. ON BASIS OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH GROMYKO IN GENEVA, EBAN SAID THAT HE WAS SURPRISED BY INSTENSITY OF SOVIET INTEREST IN SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT. GROMYKO TOLD EBAN PRIVATELY THAT SOVIETS WOULD BE PREPARED TO RESUME DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL IF THERE WAS "IMPORTANT PROGRESS" AT GENEVA. EBAN INTERPRETED THIS, PERHAPS TOO OPTIMISTICALLY,

TO REFER TO A DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT.

3. EBAN SAID IT WAS HIS JUDGEMENT THAT SOVIETS HAVE ACQUIRED PRIVILEGED STATUS IN MIDEAST BY VIRTURE OF THEIR CO-CHAIRMANSHIP AT
SECRET

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GENEVA CONFERENCE. SOVIETS SHARED USG INTEREST IN KEEPING BRITISH AND FRENCH OUT IN LIMITING WALDHEIM'S ROLE. ABOVE ALL, EBAN BELIEVED, SOVIETS WANTED TO PRESERVE US-USSR DETENTE RELATIONSHIP, AND DEFUSING OF MIDEAST TINDER BOX WAS ESSENTIAL TO THIS GOAL.

4. EBAN RAISED ONE PROBLEM WHICH CLOUDED HIS GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT, WHICH WAS THAT SOVIETS WERE TRY* G TO INSERT THEMSELVES ACTIVELY INTO WORKING GROUPS TO INFLUEINCE OUTCOME OF NEGOTIATIONS. US AND USSR HAD MARKEDLY DIFFERENT IDEAS ON THEIR FUNCTION AT CONFERENCE. WE NOTE GENEVA 64 WHICH WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE EVEN THIS PROBLEM MAY BE LESSENING.

5. THRUST OF EBAN'S REMARKS CONTRASTED MARKEDLY WITH USUALLY MORE PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT BY ISRAELI--E.G. DECEMBER 5 MEIR-RUSH CONVERSATION(JERUSALEM 1395), AND MY DEC 30 CONVERSATION WITH EVRON (TEL AVIV 105501). WE WOULD BE INTERESTED TO RECEIVE VIEWSFROM DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY MOSCOW REGARDING ANY PERCEPTIBLE CHANGES IN SOVIET MIDEAST POSTURE IN EITHER TACTICS OR SUBSTANCE.
KEATING

SECRET

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